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SUBJECT: SUDAN REBEL LEADER SEEKS DARFUR PEACE TALKS

REF: A. FRAZER-WALL EMAIL MESSAGE OF 22 APRIL 2007  
[1](#)B. HONIGSTEIN-WALL EMAIL MESSAGE FROM OF 24 APRIL  
2007

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[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) is ready to start Darfur peace talks tomorrow and wants to cooperate with the United States, JEM Chairman Khalil Ibrahim stressed in a meeting on May 5. Khalil expressed support for the United Nation's mediation effort, a Darfur ceasefire, a commitment not to permit the militarization of the refugee or internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, and a statement renouncing plans for regime change in Khartoum. He said the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) could be considered in new talks, but would not agree to relying on it as their "basis." He described self-government for Darfur as the main goal of the rebel movements. He eschewed plans for seeking Darfur self-determination or a change in the leadership or governing system in Khartoum. He objected to singling out the DPA's opponents as obstacles to peace, arguing instead that they were representing the near unanimous opinion of the Darfur people. He expressed disappointment over the failure of efforts to unite the rebel groups behind a common negotiating position. Perhaps surprisingly for a Sudanese rebel leader not known for patience or diplomacy, he took pains to counsel the need for all sides to practice more of both. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (U) On May 5, in a meeting that coincidentally took place on the first anniversary of the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in Abuja, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) Chairman Khalil Ibrahim and his top advisors called on the Ambassador and Poloff to discuss Darfur and next steps in bringing the Sudanese Government and the Darfur rebel factions to negotiations. Khalil was accompanied by other JEM representatives, including Vice Chairman Bahir Idriss, Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator Ahmed

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Tougoud, Chad-based political representative Taljadine Niam, Deputy Secretary for Darfur Timan Diro, and Deputy Secretary for Presidential Affairs Azadine Yousif.

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SLM Factions "Like Opposing Magnetic Poles"  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Asked for his assessment of the different rebel groups, Khalil confessed that efforts to unite them within the National Redemption Front (NRF) have failed. The Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) continues to fracture. It now comprises many movements using the same name, in his view. &Everyone is on their own, everyone is going their own way,8 he rued. The harder they try to unify, the more they

repel each other, he observed, adding wryly that they are "like opposing magnetic poles." Khalil said that SLM leader Sharif Harir has now organized his own group with its own army. He believed Sharif's efforts are contributing to the divisions and making it even harder to promote a unified position among the groups.

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The Key Goal: Darfur Self-Government  
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¶4. (SBU) Khalil stressed that the key political goal remains self-government for Darfur within a unified Sudan. Darfur should have the status of one unified region, he argued. It should be treated like the South is in the CPA, though without the option of self-determination. Darfur self-government would not conflict with the CPA, he stated. But it does mean that Darfur should have authority to govern itself administratively and financially. Khalil enumerated other concerns, including more representative participation for Darfur in the central government, compensation, and access to basic services.

¶5. (SBU) Khalil maintained that JEM is not seeking a new governing system in Khartoum. "We accept Bashir" as President, he asserted. "Minni can stay," he added. But what is not acceptable, he continued, is that Darfur should be under the control of a small ethnic group holding power in Khartoum.

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Common Views on Some Key Issues  
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¶6. (SBU) The Ambassador presented the points in ref B; Khalil responded in turn. JEM accepts the mediation process led by the United Nations, he said. It is prepared to work with the African Union as long as Salim Salim and his negotiating team in Abuja are replaced. Khalil concurred

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that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Darfur. He agreed that mediation is the only way to achieve peace. He took note of the point that realism and compromise will be necessary by all sides.

¶7. (SBU) Khalil reiterated that JEM does not seek regime change in Khartoum. It has held off announcing this position publicly out of deference to the other groups involved in the unification effort under the NRF. If JEM loses hope of achieving a consensus on this issue with these groups, it would consider issuing such a statement on its own.

¶8. (SBU) Khalil said JEM wants a ceasefire, even though no ceasefire now exists on the ground. He accused the regime in Khartoum of responsibility for violating the ceasefire agreements. Taljadine Niam added that the African Union also bears responsibility for the breakdown in the ceasefire. The mechanism for monitoring it through the Joint Ceasefire Commission is not working, he alleged.

¶9. (SBU) Ahmed Tougoud spoke up to express agreement on the point about refraining from militarizing the refugee and IDP camps. He claimed that JEM does not allow its military forces into the camps. Only those visiting their families are allowed into the camps, he explained. They must have permission to do so, and they must be in civilian dress, he added.

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Taking Issue with the DPA as "the Basis" for Talks  
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¶10. (SBU) Khalil took issue with the point about the DPA serving as the basis for negotiations. He emphasized that JEM & will not agree to what we rejected in Abuja.8 The

Ambassador said that it would be a step backwards if the rebels insist on starting negotiations from scratch. They should instead agree to start from the parts of the DPA that were not at issue and proceed to negotiate appropriate modifications on other aspects. Khalil responded that it would be possible to "consider" the DPA in the context of new talks. Ahmad Togoud added that the DPA's Declaration of Principles is fully acceptable, but advised against insisting on formal acceptance of the DPA as the basis for new talks as a precondition for launching them.

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Who Is the Real Obstacle to Peace?  
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¶11. (SBU) The Ambassador alerted Khalil to the U.S. intention to take action against any party seen to be an obstacle to peace in Darfur. Khalil questioned how such a determination would be made. He urged the United States not to be overbearing in using its influence. He said the agreement negotiated in Abuja was a mistake. It had been rejected by the people of Darfur. Those who others may see as obstacles to peace are merely going along with what the people of Darfur want.<sup>8</sup> The United States should realize, he said, who is really impeding the peace process ) the Sudanese government.

¶12. (SBU) The Ambassador responded that our overriding goal is peace in Darfur. We may have differences over how to pursue that goal, but we need to find a way to work together. He objected to the characterization of the DPA as a mistake, though acknowledged that it was now recognized as needing modifications. He encouraged Khalil to join in the effort to advance the peace process.

¶13. (SBU) Softening his tone, Khalil said JEM is ready to start peace talks tomorrow. He stated that JEM is not an obstacle to resuming talks. He believed it would be better if the movements could come together before entering into new talks. But he also wondered how long JEM will have to wait before the other rebel groups are ready. He speculated that perhaps it will eventually be necessary for JEM to enter into talks without the others. Taljadine Niam noted that the other groups would likely end up following the JEM's lead. If the agreement eventually negotiated is satisfactory, Khalil said, it is more likely to be accepted by them.

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An Appeal for Cooperation  
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¶14. (SBU) Turning to JEM's relationship with the United States, Khalil stressed its interest in cooperation. "We can help you more than you realize," he said. He mentioned his

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hopes one day to visit the United States. He believed that patience and diplomacy could accomplish much and pointed to the need to have a better understanding of the psychology of the rebel movements. Carrots were more effective in dealing with them, in his view. Friendly treatment brings better results, he concluded.

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Comment  
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¶15. (SBU) Khalil was in substantial agreement with many of the key points in ref B. The main exception was in acceptance of the DPA as the basis of future Darfur peace talks. He would only concede a willingness to consider it in new discussions. He also qualified support for the UN-led mediation effort by saying the AU's role would be accepted only if it named a new negotiating team. Predictably he was defensive on the point about our intentions to take action against those seen as obstacles to peace. In an otherwise

cordial and productive exchange, he became heated only in urging the United States not to be overbearing in condemning DPA opponents who he argued were representing the views of the Darfur people. At the same time, he took pains to stress his interest in entering into new talks and working closely with the United States.

¶16. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.  
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